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ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

SRI INTERNATIONAL

TOPIC Sensitive Areas of Research

TOPIC NO. 826

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PAGE NO. 1

SRI must maintain its ability to carry out projects for clients of divergent views and in areas of public interest and controversy. The following procedures are established for that purpose.

Sensitive areas of research are defined as those involving controversial subjects of public concern. The findings and conclusions of these projects, and sometimes the mere existence of such projects, are of great interest to and subject to interpretation by the press and the general public. For example, much of our work on environmental impact and the impact of regulations may fall within this definition. Also, any project proposed to be undertaken by SRI for gambling interests, whether public or private, must always be classified as sensitive.

Research management is responsible for bringing sensitive areas to the attention of the Research Council as early in the proposal planning process as possible--preferably before deciding to bid on such projects.

The Research Council will decide on the following alternatives:

- (1) The proposed work needs no special attention other than normal project and line management supervision.
- (2) The proposed work is, indeed, sensitive and will require special assistance to line management as described below.
- (3) The proposed work should not be undertaken because it has a high potential of seriously damaging SRI's stature or ability to continue in program areas of major interest.

Sensitive proposals must reflect in their pricing any special project costs attributable to "sensitive" classifications, such as outside consultants. Proposals must be approved by the Senior Vice President, Research Operations.

For each sensitive project undertaken, a committee will be established, reporting to the Senior Vice President, Research Operations, consisting of the Vice President, Programs and Administration, the senior executive in charge of public relations, and the group executive responsible for the project. The committee's function is to ensure that SRI's reputation for objectivity is preserved and that the project enhances, or at least does not detract from, SRI's ability to support its diverse clients. It will not concern itself directly with the technical and managerial aspects of sensitive projects. These remain line management functions. Particular functions of the committee are to:

ENCLOSURE 4

UNCLASSIFIED

TOPIC NO. 826

PAGE NO. 2

- (1) Be top management's repository of understanding of the project.
- (2) Ensure the consistency and objectivity of project outputs.
- (3) Guide project management in dealing with political and public relations problems.
- (4) Counsel SRI's president on problems requiring his attention.
- (5) Advise the Senior Vice President, Research Operations on any matters raised by the project that might seriously affect the future operations of SRI.

To ensure impartiality, accuracy, completeness, and acceptance, sensitive projects will often require the services of experts in various fields, both within and outside SRI. These consultants can be called upon by the committee. Costs of such consultants will, in general, be a direct charge to the project. The work of the committee itself is viewed as part of managerial functions and will be charged to overhead.